IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 19, 1826.

Mr. HENDRICKS, from the Select Committee on Roads and Canals, to whom was referred "A Bill for the Survey of a route for a Canal between the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico,"

REPORTED:

That they have given the subject all the examination which the means afforded enabled them to bestow. No documents accompanying the bill, they have availed themselves of the information of several gentlemen acquainted with the character of the country through which the proposed canal is intended to pass, and from the best lights afforded, they have no hesitation in forming the opinion, that the great importance of a canal communication between the waters of the Atlantic coast and the Gulf of Mexico, justifies the expenditure proposed, to determine the fact whether such communication be practicable or not. Nor would the committee hesitate in recommending the measure, were the probability of a favorable result to the examination much more remote than it is. The Committee are of opinion, from all the information which they have been able to procure, that this work is not only practicable, but much more easily accomplished than former estimates and opinions have supposed.

The Committee would further remark, that, from an examination of the maps and charts of the coast from the mouth of the Mississippi river to the Appalachicola or the Suwanee bay, and from information to be relied on in relation to that coast, they are induced to report an amendment to the bill, by which the survey will be extended west, through the bays of St. Andrews, St. Rosa, Pensacola, Perdido, Mobile, and Pascagoula, and through lakes Borgne and Ponchartrain, to the Mississippi, by the Iberville or the canal Carondelet. It is believed that through the lakes, bays, and inlets of this coast, a perfect inland navigation may be effected to the Suwanee bay, a distance of three hundred and fifty miles, by cutting at a few points, in all not exceeding twelve miles. The appropriation proposed in the bill, it is believed, will be sufficient for this additional purpose.

Much valuable information on these subjects is contained in the letter from Mr. White, the Delegate from the Territory of Florida, addressed to the Committee, and to which they ask leave to refer as part of their Report.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

WASHINGTON, *January 18th*, 1826.

SIR: In obedience to your request, I herewith send a copy of a letter I had the honor to address to the Secretary of War, requesting a survey and estimate of a canal, or ship channel, across the promontory of Florida, with a copy of his answer. stating that the appropriation for such objects having been exhausted, the reconnoisance could not be made, unless the necessary funds were placed under the direction of his Department.

It will be seen, by a perusal of that letter, that I had intended to communicate some interesting facts, in regard to the practicability of forming an inland navigation, from the Mississippi to the point at which the proposed ship channel should commence on the Gulf of Mexico. Since the introduction of the bill referred to your committee in the Senate, I take the liberty to suggest the propriety of an additional provision, directing a continuation of the survey, from the Apalachicola river to the Mississippi; and availing myself of your invitation, will now say, what I intended, under other circumstances, to address to the Secretary of War.

It will be observed that the Mississippi, after receiving to its bosom all the streams that flow from the mountains, through the fertile regions of the West, its bed is unable to contain them. Large navigable rivers and bayous burst from its sides, and, flowing through the valley, some of them find an outlet in the Gulf. Of this description is the Manshac or Iberville, about ninety miles above New Orleans, running into lake Maurepas, which communicates with the Gulf through lakes Ponchartrain and Borgne. The Manshac runs into Amite river, and from their junction, sixteen miles from the Mississippi, the united streams present a fine body of water to the lakes, sufficient for all the purposes of navigation. The depth of the water in Ponchartrain is generally from eighteen to twenty feet. The bay of Manshac was opened some years since, by General Wilkinson, wide enough for the passage of boats; but, during the late war, the American commander, apprehending the approch of the British troops through that channel, ordered it to be obstructed, by falling a quantity of cypress trees across it, which presents an obstacle to navigation, until they are removed. It is believed that, by clearing out these obstructions, deepening and widening the bed, constructing small levees for a short distance, and cutting off a small point at the mouth of this estuary, a considerable portion of the waters of that immense river would find an outlet to the Gulf, through the lakes; which would greatly improve their navigation, by an accumulation of water, sufficient to overcome the feeble resistance of the tides, and form a current outward to the Gulf of Mexico. By this mode of conducting off the surplus waters of the Mississippi, two great evils would be avoided; the incumbent waters in the river, and the reflux from the swamps, both of which have been found to be detrimental to the planters on its borders.

It is believed by every person, practical or scientific, that the levees cannot be extended farther up the Mississippi, without manifest danger to New Orleans and the contiguous country; and every one must be convinced, that they are inferior to artificial sluices or canals, that would convey the superabundant water to the sea by other routes than the river. It will be seen in Cuvier's essay on the theory of the earth, that the learned M. de Prony had communicated important facts, to explain the changes which took place on the shores of the Adriatic: having been appointed to examine into the causes of the devastations occasioned by the overflowings of the Po, he ascertained that this river, since it was confined by dykes, had, by deposites, so raised the level of its bottom, that its surface was higher than the roofs of the houses in Ferrara.

The Adige and the Po, like the Mississippi, are higher than the adjacent country; and the remedy against the disasters of annual overflowings is suggested, by opening new channels to discharge the waters.

I beg leave to make an extract from a work of the most learned and philosophical writer that I have seen of all who have written upon the subject of the Mississippi. "A deep canal ought to be cut, to "carry a current from the river, at all seasons, and above and below "its efflux, a strong levée formed, from the river, to whatever lake "was made the deposite. We are far from expecting that this im-"provement will be carried into effect, though its beneficial conse-"quences are too obvious to demand demonstration. Two causes op-" pose themselves to all human improvements; the difficulty of con-"vincing the public of their utility, and practicability, and the "greater difficulty of withdrawing men from their habitual course." When the waters of the main stream flow out through the valley, and meet with no deposite or outlet, such as the lakes, they rest on the back lands, and produce a reflux towards the river. By forming this communication, all these evils to the inhabitants are obviated, and the terrors of a crévasse in the levée, with its consequent destruction, avoided.

It is not incumbent upon me to discuss this subject here, further than to exhibit such a view of it, as will demonstrate to the Committee the necessity of, at least, a survey, that Congress may be enabled to act upon the certain information, and official responsibility, of its own engineers. There are several points below the Manshac, at which communications might be formed with Lake Ponchartrain by cutting less than five miles. One at Bennet quarrè, where it is said that the river, at low water, is ten feet higher than the lake; the greatest elevation of the river, at that point, during the spring floods, is estimated at twenty-three feet; this quantity expanding over such a surface as the lake, would produce but a slight effect, whilst it would greatly diminish the body, and, consequently, the danger of the river.

Should either of those two points be found too difficult, or impracticable, a canal has been projected and surveyed, at or near New Orleans, from the river into the lake; either of which will accomplish

the object, of a commencement of an inland navigation, from the Mississippi, around our southern coast, to the Atlantic. Through the lakes, and behind the islands, which stretch along the coast of the Gulf, there is a safe interior passage to Mobile Bay, a distance of 170 miles, free for vessels of any size that might be employed in that trade, without any impediments, except the slight obstructions between the river and lakes. Between the bays of Mobile and Pensacola, a distance of 50 miles, there are but two interruptions to the water communication—a portage from Bon Secours Bay to Perdido, of four and a half miles, and a half mile from the latter, to the Grand Lagoon, which communicates with Pensacola Bay, near the point lately selected by the United States for a navy yard, and naval depot; making an inland navigation for that distance, by cutting five miles only, almost in a direct line, through a level country, and a soil mixed with clay and sand, furnishing every prospect of easy excavation.

But, Sir, to show that nature herself intended this route to be continued, I beg leave to point the attention of the Committee to the facilities it embraces. Santa Rosa Sound makes out from the bay of Pensacola 40 miles, to Choctawhachie Bay, of about the same length; from the end of which, a few miles up East river, will reach a point within five miles of the West end of St. Andrew's Bay, through a soil and surface, presenting no difficulties to the continuation of the work; from that point to the East end of the bay, in a line with the whole route, is about twenty-four miles; from thence to the Chipola river, at a point near which there is a large, open, natural communication, from the Apalachicola, is about two miles. Thus, with the inconsiderable obstructions at the Mississippi, the removal of small impediments at a few points, and the cutting of twelve miles, an inland navigation may be effected of 350 miles, from the Mississippi to the Apalachicola, the place at which the survey is to terminate, by the bill referred to your Committee.

It is seldom that nature is so bountiful to a people, as to those of the Southern and Western States; bountiful in the luxuriance of soil, and in the value and variety of products, and bountiful to excess in the facilities of commerce. The rivers that flow into the Mississippi connect together the Western States, whilst the Southern are connected by the sounds, lakes, and bayous, which form, and the rivers which flow into this great inland channel, extending around our Southern coast. The body and branches of this mighty river and canal, will hold them united by the indissoluble link of trade, interest, and intercourse, whilst the ship channel will connect them with the East, at every harbor, port, and point of contact, from the Alleghany to the Gulf, and from the Sabine to the Atlantic.

To effect an inland navigation of unbroken continuity, for 350 miles, by cutting 12 miles—such is the labor to be performed; so cheap, natural, and so essential to an uninterrupted communication, from the North and East, to the West, and from the West to the extreme South, and from thence to the Atlantic! Moreover, Sir, the States of Tennessee and Alabama contemplate a canal from the Ten-

nessee to the Alabama river; of which, the Bay of Mobile will be the outlet; thus rendering this canal important to those States, and more valuable to the Union. The people of the West have long had to contend against difficulties and dangers in transporting their produce to a foreign market. Though nature had given them a great outlet to the sea, it is far removed from the course of European trade; plunging into the Gulf of Mexico, they have many perils to brave, many leagues to traverse, before they reach the Atlantic. The dangers of the navigation subject them, on their outward passage, to shipwreck and plunder. Should they be fortunate enough to escape, on their return home, with the produce of their enterprise, they are retarded by the Gulf Stream, Florida Capes, and the still more appalling dangers of pirates.

Nature has given to the West the finest river in the world; and if the Government will remedy the defects of its distant disemboguement, they start with their Atlantic brethren, in the equal race of wealth and prosperity, on the great highway of European commerce, and the issue is left to their energy.

From the lowness of it banks, and the fragility of its levees, the Mississippi often bursts its embankments, and overwhelms the farms that cover its bottoms; and it would be idle to say to the Committee that such inundations over fields of cotton and sugar are ruinous in the extreme. To diminish this danger in the slightest degree, would be a national benefit, far greater than would be commensurate with the cost to be incurred. I have, therefore, suggested, that, by clearing out the Manshac, the first stage in the great route of natural canaling, you give to the Mississippi an outlet through which much of its surplus volume would pass, into the Lakes first, and then into the Gulf, without hazard to its borders, and with manifest relief to its levees. It is thus that another eligible mouth is created, where it is so eminently useful; a portion of its waters, too great for its bed, and current drawn off, a surplus ruinous to its settlers, and hazardous to New Orleans. By this work the marshes are drained, the hot-bed of fever broken up, and death strangled in its cradle. By draining the delta of the Mississippi, millions of acres of land are reclaimed from inundation; a boundless field for industry and enterprise opened to the growers of sugar, and, in the course of time, our country freed from the tribute she now pays to the West India Islands for the purchase of this necessary article of consumption.

This canal would connect all the bays and rivers of the Gulf, furnish a safe and easy conveyance from all their ramifications, of the valuable timber and productions of their borders, to the ports from which they could be most conveniently shipped; give an increased value to the public lands through which it would pass, and thus remunerate the Government for its expenditures.

In the letter to the Secretary of War, as in this communication, I have advanced opinions with confidence, which, in some particulars, perhaps in many, may be erroneous; but that confidence has been inspired by a conviction of their general correctness, from observations

during nearly four years' residence in the country, and the best information which I have been enabled to obtain from intelligent persons, whose attention has been directed to its examination. In my humble judgment, the expense of the work has been greatly over-rated. When Mr. Gallatin estimated the expense of the canal from the Mississippi to the Atlantic, at three millions of dollars, he had not the most remote conception that nature had done so much towards its accomplishment. What a different estimate would he have made, if he had known that, in 350 miles of that distance, only twelve miles of excavation was required!

When the subject of canals is introduced, the mind is involuntarily led to the estimate, from a comparison with other works; and as there is but one of great magnitude in the United States, that is selected. A moment's consideration will expose the fallacy of such a calculation: The Grand Canal of New York has been cut through a region where mountains were to be cut down and valleys to be filled up; miles of solid granite to be excavated, rivers to be crossed by stupendous aqueducts:—a just comparison would demonstrate that several miles might be cut in Florida, where one could be in New York.

The peninsula of Florida has been variously and erroneously represented, as it suited the visionary speculations of those who have written on the subject. I have lately seen it asserted, by one writer, that it was a solid mass of limestone; by another, that it was a sand bank; both equally remote from the truth. Limestone in masses, may be found in situations more elevated and remote from the sea; but in this peninsula it occurs in irregular strata, with the interstices occupied by earths and exuvia. This general character is demonstrated not only in the numerous sinks and cavities which indent the superstrata. but by the infinite number and variety of subterranean water-courses that penetrate and pervade the bowels of the earth. And it is important to remark, that, although the presence of limestone is a prominent feature, yet it is only a portion of the general mass, for, within a short distance of the margin of the great Alachua prairie, and near the centre of the peninsula, a well of 32 feet deep, penetrated 29 of the distance through an uninterrupted bed of clay, to a compost of clay, sand, and shells, where water was obtained; and at another well, distant three miles, but near the same prairie, limestone occurred, but it opposed no other obstacles to excavation than what were easily surmounted by the axe and the spade. From these data, therefore, and others afforded by the spacious and deep beds of the Lakes with which this region abounds, it is evident that the work of excavation for a canal is in a great measure performed by nature, and that the remainder may be completed without encountering any of the difficulties inseparable from regions characterised by primary formation.

The route of this canal will pass through a country abounding with lakes and natural channels. and where excavation may be necessary, it will be in clay and argillaceous soil, and occasional limestone, and the banks could be secured, if occasion required, by the cedar and

cypress, of which the vicinity furnishes an amply supply. As the object is to obtain more accurate information, by the employment of scientific engineers, any further remarks on this subject would be superfluous.

The attention of the American people has been strongly directed to internal improvements. The brilliant example of Great Britain in the old world, and of the states of New York and Ohio in the new, furnish a happy augury of its extended utility to the citizens of this Union. The waters of the Eastern Main, are already connected with the lakes of the North, which, in their turn, by the enterprise of Ohio, will soon pour out their waters into the Ohio river, burthened with the produce of a mighty nation. To descant on the utility of a measure like this, would be useless. By it, the products of the soil are wafted to a distant depot; the tiller of the soil, no matter in what latitude he may live, no matter how distant his destinies may have thrown him from the ocean, he finds, by the bounties of Providence, and the enterprise of Government, the merchant at his door ready to exchange for his labors, the price of its value, and thus new facilities are added to the channels of commerce, which have been scattered by the bountiful God of nature, with so prodigal a hand, over our continent.

Fifty years ago, canals were unknown in England, and within that period, fifteen millions have been expended in their construction; their foreign commerce has been enlarged, and their internal trade has far exceeded it in extent, value, and importance. One hundred and sixty-five acts of Parliament have been passed for making and perfecting them. What results may not be anticipated from this internal navigation in the United States? By the completion of this work, the commerce of the whole continent will be changed; boats will pass with safety from St. Louis and Pittsburg, to the interior of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia; these States will return their products through the same channels to the centre of the Union, or meet shipping for foreign ports, around the Florida coast, at the most convenient ports. The period is not distant, when a boat starting at New York will pass up the grand Canal through the lakes, Ohio canal, and thence down the Mississippi along this channel, and discharge her cargo at Mobile, Pensacola, and St. Marks, Augustine, Savannah, or Charleston, by a safe navigation. The heavy item of transportation in time of war, is diminished ten fold. Cuba ceases to be of any importance to us in a political point of view; the Moro Castle has no terrors in time of war; the pirates are broken up; an expensive naval armament is no longer necessary; the public lands are enhanced in value; the commerce of the Indies, and of the Southern continent, will pass through our borders, and the various commercial, military, and political advantages of this great nation "rising into destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye," will be developed and called into practical operation.

I beg leave to call the particular attention of the committee to the maps sent herewith.

I have the honor to be,
With high considerations of respect,
Your most obedient servant,
JOS. M. WHITE.

Hon. WM. HENDRICKS,
Chairman of Roads and Canals in the Senate.

Extract of a letter from J. M. White, Esq. Delegate from the Territory of Florida, to the Secretary of War.

WASHINGTON, *Nov.* 20, 1825.

SIR: As Delegate from the Territory of Florida, I deem it my duty to address you on some of the subjects of Internal improvement, in that portion of our empire immediately under the control of your Department.

It is known to you that the Territory of Florida has a defenceless seacoast of 1,200 miles, bounded by the Gulf of Mexico on the West, and on the East by the Atlantic. From Suwanee river to Tampa Bay, and from thence to St. Augustine, a distance of seven or eight hundred miles, there is no safe anchorage, and scarcely a settlement on the coast. It is proposed, by a Canal or thorough-cut from Vacassar Bay, at the mouth of the Suwanee river, to the St. John's river, to connect the waters of the Gulf and the Atlantic. The distance across the peninsula is said to be about ninety miles, and the distance of cutting, to unite the waters of both, is said to be, by one route, 18 miles, and by another *only* 12 *miles*. The Suwanee river discharges itself into Vacassar Bar, which is represented to be spacious, affording a good harbor and anchorage. It is very probable, that, should Engineers report in favor of a ship channel, which will be more particularly referred to hereafter, it may require double the distance of canalling, say 24 or 36 miles, to avoid the sinuosities of the streams; or some other points more advantageous for its commencement and termination may present themselves to intelligent and skilful Engineers, who may be ordered to the spot; but I am assured the distance of canalling will not exceed the last mentioned distance.

The facillities of this enterprize are at once visible from an examination of the map; its advantages to a comprehensive mind will readily occur from the same inspection. The largest portion of East Florida is a peninsula, four or five hundred miles from the Georgia line on the North, to cape Sable on the South, and only ninety from East to West. The produce of the Western States rolling down the Mississippi, and that of the states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, and the Territory of Florida, by their numerous rivers pass into the Gulf and along the Coast of Florida,

around the peninsula, twelve hundred miles. By a canal or thorough-cut, the distance would be shortened about one thousand. The navigation around the capes of Florida is the most dangerous on the American coast. The Tortugas banks, Florida reefs, and shoals of the Bahamas, combined with the depredations of pirates, occasion to our citizens an annual loss estimated at five hundred thousand dollars. It would be needless to say that this canal or cut would furnish a safe navigation, as well as a short one, and the annual loss we now sustain would be doubly, perhaps four-fold sufficient to complete it.

I would beg leave strongly to call your attention to this subject at the present moment. Congress, at the last session, appropriated thirty thousand dollars to make estimates and surveys for Internal Improvement on an extensive plan; and, whilst we are yet a Territory; that the withering doctrine of state rights may not blight the hopes of a rising country, we ask your aid. After the survey is completed, such an appropriation as was made by Congress to connect the waters of the Muskingum with the Cuyahoga, a stream of Lake Erie, or the one subsequently made to connect the Wabash and the St. Mary's, and the Plein and Chicago flowing into Lake Michigan, will be entirely adequate.

The great duty of a Government is to defend the territory committed to its charge, and its first policy, to invite emigration to its borders. The United States have in Florida about twenty millions of acres of lands. These have been partly surveyed, and one inconsiderable sale effected, and much of it is yet unknown and unexplored. By this canal, emigration would be invited to the interior, and extend its progress to the rich streams with which it would communicate. Farm houses and villages would spring up in what is now a wilderness, and the tide of population roll on to the shores of the ocean. Lands which are now a lake or morass, would bloom with rice or cotton.

It is not in this alone that a canal would benefit the Territory. It would give to her means and facilities of defence which the nature of her coast has denied : it would make her ports the depots of foreign wealth, and the emporium of western products.

To the Government, an immense profit would accrue, from the increased value of public lands; many thousand acres may be reclaimed from inundation, and a considerable saving, by what then would no longer be necessary, the expensive equipment of vessels, for the suppression of piracy. This canal has much higher claims to the attention of the Government than the single interest of the territory can give it. The Western States of our Union are vitally interested in the measure. The Mississippi rolls its majestic course through four thousand miles of our richest territory; the numerous branches which contribute to its grandeur, are, themselves, mighty rivers, running from the North and from the South, from the East and West, fertilizing the regions through which they flow, and connecting, by the links of commerce, the whole Western world.

If, in a tract of internal navigation, so widely extended and diffused, spreading its wealth, facilities, and its blessings, over mountains, plains, and deserts, the pioneer of commerce should meet with some obstructions left there by nature, for the enterprise of man, it is his duty to remove them. It is for this that government is instituted, that the congregated wealth, energies, and intellect of a people, should be united, and directed to the diffusion of general good, when individual means would fail. It is for this, too, that our government has, or ought to have, the power, in its confederated union, that the national means might be applied alternately, with undivided strength, to the perfection of each of its parts, in all the power of national wealth, energy, and intercourse. We are not a nation of soldiers; and, but for an object such as this, our Union, in time of peace, would hang on the wearied limbs of the confederacy, like a rusty coat of armour, unseemly to the eye, and burthensome to the shoulders.

It is estimated that the produce boated down the Mississippi alone, amounts to nearly one-third of all the exports of the United States. This, passing into the Gulf, draws its wearied way round the capes of Florida to the Atlantic coast. By the proposed canal, more than a thousand miles of sailing would be saved—the manifold dangers I have enumerated shunned, and the frequent wrecks, resulting in the ruin of thousands, totally avoided. I would ask, if these are not deep and important advantages? If these are not appalling responsibilities for that Government to incur, who will leave longer undone a work so cheap in the execution—so deeply freighted with blessings to one half of its population? I would ask, if this would not stab deeper into the vitals of piracy, than any armament the Government can equip? No naval force can approach their haunts, embosomed in creeks, forests, and morasses. No piratical force can approach our commerce, embosomed in a canal, through the heart of our country. The islands that afford them shelter, are approached no longer, and the vile trade is destroyed by robbing them of their victims. Such ports as Key West will no longer be a grave-yard for our brave seamen, and the occupation of their shores will cease with the cessation of their cause and necessity; our navy may then breathe a purer atmosphere, and boast a nobler service.

These, sir, are some few of its advantages in time of peace; but, should our happy country be again visited with the calamities of war, we should have, from Massachusetts to Mississippi, from Mississippi to St. Augustine, from one end to the other of our wide-spread empire, one connected chain of internal communication. The most distant sections of our country may then interchange their products, without the hazard of foreign aggression. The trade of the North and New York, will pass up the great canal to Lake Erie, and from thence through the Ohio Canal to New Orleans; and from thence, through an internal navigation, which I shall have the honor to submit, in some future communication, to Mobile, Pensacola, and the coast of Florida, and up the numerous rivers of Alabama and Georgia; and these States, by the same route, will send back their sugar, rice,

fruits, cotton, and timber. The Government would find a facility and safety in the transportation of soldiers and munitions of war, hitherto so much desired, and, by the introduction of steam, which already spreads its benign influence over the world, extending to the noblest objects of art, and not disdaining the meanest. The transportation of the mail would be expedited, and commerce, communication, trade, and a common interest, unite together, by a chain of gold, the East and the West—shiver the fabric of sectional prejudice, and bring, by the annihilation of space and distance, the settlers on opposite frontiers into immediate neighborhood with each other.

But, sir, in the now enlightened, though tardy policy of our Government, it has been deemed sufficient, for the construction of a public work, that it was attended with local advantages alone. The grand canal of New York, which pours into her Treasury, like the fabled lap of Danæ, showers of gold, is local, partial in its benefits. The hundred canals of England, which intersect that country, are local and partial also; and so with the contemplated junction of Ohio and Erie, of Chesapeake and the Delaware; and these form a sufficient impulse to their construction.

In the canal for which we ask, I trust, sir, I have shown the deep local interest of my constituents. I trust I have done more: that I have shown the deep interest of the Government itself, and of all the States West of the Allegany. I think I have shown it to be the most efficacious mode of suppressing piracy in those seas, in which they are nested, by deserting the seas themselves, and forcing them to seek a more honest subsistence, by diverting the commerce, on which they fatten, to a safer channel. At St. Augustine, or the mouth of the St. John's, where our commerce would flow into the Atlantic, you well know, sir, there are no islands, or forests, or imbecile governments, to whom they could fly for protection. It is all a boundless and friendly ocean, too remote from their harbors to dread their presence.

We have yet farther claims on the Government for assistance. The youthful Republic of Mexico has already signalized its independence by a projected ship channel, connecting the waters of the Pacific and Atlantic, through the Isthmus of Nicaragua. This done, the commerce of the Southern Continent would disembogue itself in the Gulf of Mexico, and pass directly along the coast of Florida. Thus, not only the Western States, who trade directly through the Gulf and around the peninsula, to the Atlantic, are interested in the Florida canal; but, make it a ship channel, or thorough-cut, and the whole Eastern section of our seacoast and country, by a shorter navigation, a safer and better, through Florida to the Gulf, and through Nicaragua to the Pacific, will find an outlet for their commerce. The mouths into the Gulf of Mexico, of the two channels, as proposed by the projectors, are nearly opposite to each other; and commerce would be saved around the coast of Mexico, of Guatemala, and Cape Horn, four thousand miles of perilous navigation, and more than one thousand around the capes of Florida.

I hope, sir, these will not be considered the day-dreams of a visionary projector. The practicability of the scheme would be manifest to your engineers, on an inspection of the country. The expenses of the work cannot be compared with any other canal, because no similar experiment has been made; an estimate from the expenditures in the excavation of canals through the granitic and calcareous regions, it will readily occur to you, would be entirely fallacious. The soil through which this would pass, is of the description denominated by the geologist red sand and river alluvion, passing below where the mountains terminate near the Gulf, with few undulations, and requiring, in all probability, no locks or aqueducts. The greatest argument in favor of a thorough-cut, or ship channel without locks, across the peninsula, will be found in the situation of the Gulf, and the consequences resulting from the fact, that the waters of the Gulf are higher than the Atlantic by several feet, owing to two causes—the tropical trade wind blowing from the coast of Africa in that direction, and impelling the waves in the same course for twelve hundred leagues, until encountered by the east wind, the water is heaped up in the circle, or what is called by the natives cul de sac, formed by the shores of Mexico, Louisiana, and Florida. This is accounted for, as you have no doubt observed, by philosophical writers, on the same principles of analogy as the flood tide in the Mediterranean, and the accumulation of waters in the harbor of Marseilles, and the Red Sea at Suez. To this may be added an auxiliary cause, the discharge of all the waters of the tributary streams into the Gulf. This, however, is of minor importance in producing the constant current known to mariners by the Gulf Stream, when its extent and magnitude is considered, and when we advert to the fact, that, of all the streams that flow into the Mediterranean, a greater quantity is taken off by evaporation, which is demonstrated by the influx of water at the Straights of Gibraltar. Whatever may be the speculations in regard to the cause of the elevation of the waters of the Gulf, one fact is clear, that it must seek its equilibrium in some direction. This it cannot do between Yucatan and Cuba, because the double current of air and water sets in from that quarter. The only channel left is on the north side of Cuba, along the Florida coast and channel of the Bahamas. Being unobstructed in that course by the trade winds, and protected by the Island of Cuba and the Bahamas, it pursues its direction with considerable velocity around the Atlantic coast, to the Banks of Newfoundland. It is apparent, therefore, that a communication once effected through the Peninsula, the waters, which have the greatest accumulation on that part of the coast of the Gulf, would seek an outlet by a gentle current, similar to the one on the Bahama Banks. These facts, however, can be made known to you when the levels are ascertained by skilful engineers, with mathematical certainty. Should it be found, upon examination, that the current from the Gulf to the St. John's was too strong for a vessel to stem, the distance is so short that steam boats would rapidly ply along the channel, as they now do in the Mississippi, and tow the laboring vessel to its destined

harbor. It will not escape you, that vessels coming around the Cape, from the eastward, would avoid the influence of this stream for one thousand miles, where it is most dangerous. By this scheme, Cuba ceases to be what she now is, the key to the Gulf of Mexico. The trade of America would then pass by neither of her coasts; and into whatever hands she may fall, whether the Patriots, who now threaten her shores, or remain under the dominion of Pirates, who have long governed her councils, is of no moment to us, who have by this found an outlet of our own, distant alike from each section of her treacherous channel.

I have now endeavored to present the facilities, advantages, and practicability, of a channel through Florida. If I have trespassed too long on your time and attention, I beg you to look to the importance of the subject, to the deep interest involved, of the Territory, the Government, the Union, and the World.—The necessity of extending to settlers the inducement to emigration; of protecting our coasts now so much exposed; of extending to the trade of your Western country the protection of your parental care; of breaking up the nest of hornets who infest our trade, by making it our interest to desert those seas in which alone they can harbor themselves; of counteracting the influence of the Gulf Stream, in the intercourse from East to West; of facilitating the intercourse by mail of our distant regions; of giving to Government, in time of peace or war, the facilities of universal internal transportation; and, finally, rendering the commerce of all nations that trade in that quarter tributary to our shores, by making it their interest to pass from East to West, from West to East, from one great ocean that circles the globe to the other, directly through our soil. Such, Sir, are some few of the advantages of a Florida channel, that I have attempted imperfetly to press upon your attention. The undivided interest of a mighty empire like this are always pressing and urgent; and now that our climate is most congenial to the health of strangers, I would beg leave to suggest the propriety of an immediate survey—that the report may be made before the end of the session, and the great work, teeming with blessings to thousands, may be immediately consummated I could here add, Sir, that our government has abandoned the imposition of taxes for the purposes of revenue; and whilst we rely for that object on imposts and custom house duties, there are no means so certain to increase them, as the opening of new ports and constructing new channels of commerce. And whilst I believe that such incalculable benefits will result from the work proposed, the millions who will be enriched will never fail to remember in their benedictions the munificent Government which achieved it.

I have the honor to be,

With high considerations of respect,

Your obedient servant,

JOSEPH M. WHITE.

Hon. JAMES BAROUR, *Secretary of War.*

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of War to J. M. White, Esq.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *November 29th*, 1825.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your memoir, dated the 28th instant, disclosing the great benefit which would result from a canal, to be cut through the Territory of Florida, by which a short and safe passage might be substituted for the present circuitous and dangerous one around the Florida Cape; and recommending it to the attention of the Executive, so far as to obtain a reconnoisance of the country by the United States' Engineers.

It is due to the occasion to acknowledge that the view you have presented imparts a high interest to the subject, and is entitled to the most respectful consideration. But, at this time, it is impossible to cause the inspection you request, as the means and persons under the control of this Department are both wanting. Should it be the pleasure of Congress to place under the control of the Executive the necessary means for making further surveys of our country, the measure you suggest will claim its earliest attention, with every prospect, from its magnitude, of a favorable decision.

I am, very respectfully, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES BARBOUR.

Hon. JOS. M WHITE,

Delegate from Florida, now at Washington.